

Horticulture Tips

July 2004

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
Oklahoma State University

GARDEN TIPS FOR JULY!

David Hillock

Vegetable Garden

- Make fall vegetable garden plantings in late July. Fact Sheet 6009 gives planting recommendations.

Lawn

- Brown patch disease of cool-season grasses can be a problem. (F-6420)
- Meet water requirements of turfgrasses. (F-6420)
- Fertilization of warm-season grasses can continue if water is present for growth. (F-6420)
- Vegetative establishment of warm-season grasses should be completed by the end of July to ensure the least risk of winter kill. (F-6419)
- Mowing heights for cool-season turfgrasses should be at 3 inches during hot, dry summer months. Gradually raise mowing height of bermudagrass lawns from 1 1/2 to 2 inches.
- Sharpen or replace mower blades as needed. Shredded leaf blades are an invitation to disease and allow more stress on the grass.

Tree and Shrub

- Control bermudagrass around trees and shrubs with Poast, Fusilade or Glyphosate herbicides. Follow directions closely to avoid harming plants.

Fruits

- Continue insect combat and control in the orchard, garden, and landscape. (F-7306, F-7313)
- Check pesticide labels for "stop" spraying recommendations prior to harvest.
- Harvest fruit from the orchard early in the morning and refrigerate as soon as possible.

Flowers

- Divide and replant crowded Hybrid Iris (Bearded Iris) after flowering until August.

General Landscape

- Water plants deeply and early in the morning. Most plants need approximately 1 to 2 1/2 inches of water per week.
- Providing birdbaths, shelter and food will help turn your landscape into a backyard wildlife habitat.
- Insect identification is important so you don't get rid of the "Good Guys." (F-7307)
- The hotter and drier it gets, the larger the spider mite populations!
- Expect some leaf fall, a normal reaction to drought. Water young plantings well.
- Have you visited the *Oklahoma Gardening Studio Gardens* in Stillwater for a group tour?

Water Garden Plants Belong in the Water Garden – ONLY!!

David Hillock

A small water garden is a great source of relaxation and enjoyment for an increasing number of Oklahomans. While water gardening can certainly be a rewarding hobby, individuals should take certain precautions to ensure that their water garden will not harm the surrounding native environment.

"Water gardens are great, however people need to be aware of the potential problems they could cause if they release non-native plants into nearby lakes and streams," said Gene Gilliland, senior fisheries biologist for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

Many of the plants used in water gardens, such as water hyacinth or milfoil, are non-native species. One of the reasons these plants are so popular is that they can reproduce rapidly - quickly filling a water garden with lush vegetation. For this same reason they can have a very negative impact on Oklahoma's lakes and rivers.

"If gardeners release these plants into a nearby drainage ditch or creek, they can out-compete our native species and become very difficult to eradicate or even control," Gilliland said. Water hyacinth and water lettuce are two of the most common water garden plants which could become ecological problems when released. According to Gilliland, a large water fern known as giant salvinia, poses the highest threat to native environments.

"Once established, non-native plants can decrease native plant diversity, block out light from entering the water and even harm fishing in the long term," Gilliland said. There is a wide range of alternatives to releasing excess or otherwise unwanted plants into the environment. "You can burn them, mulch them, or give them away to a fellow water gardener. Basically, do anything except release them into a nearby creek or pond," Gilliland said. "This situation has not become serious yet, but everyone needs to do their part so people can enjoy their water gardens as well as our lakes and rivers."

The Wildlife Department has published a full-color poster designed to help water gardeners identify non-native plants as well as show the beauty of native varieties. To obtain a copy of the poster call the Oklahoma Fisheries Research Laboratory at (405) 325-7288. For a list of plants that have been classified as potentially harmful, log onto www.wildlifedepartment.com/aquaticplants.htm

Excerpt from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Weekly Wildlife News, week of June 24.

Plant Profile - Peonies

David Hillock

Peonies are the "Queen of Spring" and the lazy man's perennial. Once planted, they don't like to be disturbed.

Peonies grow best in full sunlight, but will grow in partial shade if they get at least half a day's sunlight. Too much shade will reduce the number of flowers. Also aggressive tree and shrub roots will rob the peony of nutrients and water. However, peonies often grow successfully in the average shrub border.

Peonies grow well in fertile, well drained soil. The ideal soil for flower production is a well drained loam soil. A sandy loam soil is better for a rapid increase in stock. They do not grow well in poorly drained soil where water stands any time of the year. Peonies growing in wet soil gradually weaken and are finally killed by root rots.

Deep soil preparation is essential for the peony's deep roots. Start with a liberal application of well rotted manure and work the soil to a depth of 18 to 24 inches. Do not plant peonies in a soil containing fresh manure. Even well rotted manure should be worked into the soil a few weeks before planting in early autumn. Work in a fertilizer high in phosphorus at the same time if a soil test indicates low phosphorus levels.

If soil is properly prepared, little fertilizer is needed for four or five years. Light applications of a complete fertilizer high in phosphorus will give good results. Rich nitrogen fertilizers should not be used. They tend to produce excessive leafy growth, weak stems, fewer flowers, and make the plants more susceptible to disease.

Choice of peony variety is a matter of personal taste. Many colors and types are available. Tree peonies generally don't grow well in Oklahoma.

Peony divisions often are shriveled when received in the spring. This does not usually harm them, but it is wise to soak them in water for a few hours before planting. A three to five eye division is preferred to larger tubers. Their growth for the first season or two may be somewhat slower, but the resulting plants are much stronger. The eyes or buds should not be covered with more than two inches of soil. This is the main reason peonies fail to flower in Oklahoma.

Mid-September is the best planting time for home peony divisions. The general rule for dividing perennials is the season opposite their flowering. Thus the spring flowering peony is divided in the fall.

Peonies should not be planted too close together. Some smaller growing varieties may be planted as close as three feet apart, but larger growing varieties should be planted four feet apart. Peonies should not be transplanted frequently especially the double types. Well grown peony plants, ten years old or older, should continue to produce perfect blooms. Three or four year old plants make the best divisions to increase stock.

Peonies often do not produce typical flowers until well established. This can be as long as three or four years. Don't be discouraged if the first flowers are only semi-double, or are slightly off color. Properly planted peonies will reward you with beautiful flowers and handsome foliage for years with minimum care.

Culinary Herbs for Oklahoma Gardens

David Hillock

Culinary herbs are plants grown for flavoring various kinds of foods. Many kinds are adapted to and grow successfully in Oklahoma gardens. The plants, in many instances, are ornamental and interesting to grow.

Frequently, the beginner plants far too much of individual kinds of herbs. Since very small amounts are used in most foods, plan on growing few plants of each kind that is not frequently used.

In many instances the flavors imparted by home-grown herbs are stronger or more pungent than available commercial materials so use very small quantities until experienced.

The general culture of herb plants is quite similar to both vegetables and flowers. Suitable soil, mulching, irrigation, plant spacing and insect control should be followed. In the control of insects and diseases the gardener must recognize needed cautions regarding chemical residues on plant parts which will be harvested and used. For pesticide recommendations, contact your local County Cooperative Extension Office.

Herbs are classified with respect to their life span. Some are annuals and thus grown from seed with the knowledge that portions will be harvested at the appropriate time. Usually mature seeds may be harvested and used for plantings in future years.

Other kinds are biennials which suggest the plant will grow and produce during portions of two seasons. Seed production generally takes place only during the second year of growth. With carrot and caraway, the usual flavoring substance used is the seed while with parsley it is the foliage. The seeds would be the product of the second growing season while the best parsley foliage for flavoring would be produced the first season.

Another group of herbs are perennials and may grow and produce several years from one planting. In several instances seeds are not produced so the grower may use bulbs, roots, rhizomes or cuttings to propagate more plants.

Harvesting and storage

Those herbs used as leaves usually are more flavorful when harvested at or just before blooming. In such instances, harvest portions of the stems with leaves and flowers or flower buds attached. Following thorough drying in locations with minimum sunlight to reduce the loss of color, materials may be stored in darkened areas in airtight containers or in containers in the freezer. Some herbs are preferred as fresh material to be used as a garnish thus might not be collected for drying. Many herbs are available commercially as dry, rather finely ground or rubbed materials. For those who desire to grind or pulverize home processed materials, it is best to grind only small amounts rather than all as soon as dried. There may be a greater loss in aroma and flavor following prolonged storage after grinding.

Some Culinary Herbs for Oklahoma

Annuals: Anise , Basil, Borage, Coriander, Dill, Fennel, Garden Cress, Nasturtium, Savory

Biennials: Carrot, Caraway, Parsley

Perennials: Chives, Garlic, Horseradish, Lemon Balm, Mints, Oregano, Rosemary, Sage, Tarragon, Thyme

(Originally prepared by W. R. Kays)

Common Garden Flowers are Edible

David Hillock

Common edible flowers grown in Oklahoma include the chrysanthemum, calendula, nasturtium, rose, yucca, daylily (*Hemerocallis*) and squash blossoms.

Chrysanthemums are a favorite culinary flower of the Orient. In Japan and China, both the flower and the leaves are eaten, however, most varieties grown in the United States have leaves too tough and bitter to eat. The chrysanthemum flowers, however, can be eaten. They are generally used in soups.

Calendula has been grown in herb gardens for centuries. They are cool-season plants and grow best during the cooler time of the year in Oklahoma. They resemble the marigold, but should not be confused with it. The dried or fresh petals of calendula blossoms are used to color rice, noodles, soups, broths, cakes, salads, puddings, meat, cheese, and butter. Add a couple of dried petals to your next batch of deviled eggs for a new tasty treat.

Nasturtium is an old-fashioned type garden flower. The leaves and flowers of nasturtium are delicious in salads. The blossoms also make a rather tasty sandwich.

Roses have long been used in candies, cakes, spreads, and jams. The old-fashioned or wild varieties are best to cook with. The petals make an excellent salad mixed with chicory and served with oil and rose vinegar. Rose "hips" are also an excellent source of vitamin C.

Yucca blooms are sold in Guatemala in the produce section of the supermarket. Boiled or fried they slightly resemble asparagus in flavor. Daylily and squash blossoms may be used in about the same ways, although they have distinctively different tastes. The buds may be picked before they are fully open and boiled, fried, pickled, or used in omelets or fritters.

Upcoming Horticulture Events

Wine Grape Production Field Day

July 24, 2004

Oklahoma Fruit Research Station, Perkins

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, OSU Department of Horticulture, & the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service will be sponsoring a Wine Grape Field Day on July 24, 2004.

The field day participants will be registering at the Oklahoma Fruit Research Station at 9 a.m. before touring the grape plots. The afternoon session and lunch will be provided at Woodland Park Vineyard in Stillwater.

The morning session will cover crop estimates, variety performance and training systems as well as insect and disease management. The afternoon session will discuss the variety/rootstock trial and training systems in place at the Woodland Park Vineyard.

Those wishing to attend the field day should call either the Kerr Center at 918-647-9123 or the OSU Horticulture Department at 405-744-5404 to help with planning the noon meal sponsored by the Kerr Center. There is no charge for the field day or lunch.

Directions to the Oklahoma Fruit Research Station are one-half mile north of the intersection of Hwy 177 and Hwy 33 north of Perkins, OK. For reference there is a Sonic Drive-In at the intersection. The Woodland Park Vineyard is located at 3023 North Jardot Street in Stillwater. From the intersection of Hwy 177 and Hwy 51 in Stillwater, travel east one mile to Jardot Street. Turn north on Jardot and travel 2 1/2 miles. Woodland Park Vineyard is located on the east side of Jardot Street about 1/2 mile north of Lakeview Street.

Horticultural Therapy Conference

September 1, 2004

Holiday Inn, Stillwater

Multi-State Plant Materials Conference

September 22-23, 2004

Holiday Inn, Stillwater

Nursery/Greenhouse Trade Show and Convention

October 8-9, 2004

Cox Convention Center, Oklahoma City

Tree Care Issues Conference

November 3, 2004

OSU Botanical Gardens Educational Building, Stillwater

For more information about upcoming events, please contact Stephanie Larimer at 405-744-5404 or steph@okstate.edu.